

10 Ways to Control your Anger

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During moments of weakness, many of us succumb to the designs of shaytan and our weakness. As human, our emotions react either positively or negatively to a situation. Sometimes we lose our objectiveness or sense of logic and thus lose control and behave in a manner that is against human intellect and nature.

Anger is a deception and temptation of shaytan and a major root from the roots of evil. Anger is a spark that continually tries to inflame everything around it and a condition that weakens a person's faith and causes injury.

Today we find that anger management programmes are becoming a major business in the West. There are many people who pay huge amounts of money to attend such courses with the aim of being able to manage or overcome their anger. As Muslims, we are given the best of programmes and the most effective of tools at our disposal to alleviate the problem of anger.

Abu Hurayrah RA narrates that a man asked the Prophet (S): "Advise me." The Prophet said, "Do not become angry and furious." The man asked (the same) again and again, and the Prophet said in each case, "Do not become angry and furious." [Al-Bukhari; Vol. 8 No. 137]

Imam An-Nawawi informed that Ibn Abi Zayd said: "Everything that constitutes good manners can be derived from four hadith..." and mentioned amongst them is the Prophet's (S) statement "...to the one to whom he limited his counsel with: 'Do not get angry'."

The real strength of a man lies in controlling his anger as it is reported in Saheeh al Bukhari on the authority of Abu Hurayrah RA that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger."

Anger is an emotion that inspires action, and the action that it inspires is one of injury and injustice. For those who get angry have to be advised on how to control anger since it is a very powerful emotion. It rages through a person, creating a desire for revenge and to striking out at the object of anger. The emotion of anger invokes within a person the very opposite of mercy, compassion, self-restraint, and kindness. If left unchecked, anger can lead a person to evil deeds and to the most tragic consequences.

Below are ten points derived from the Islamic texts that will help Muslims overcome their anger in one aspect or another:

1. Seeking refuge in Allah from shaytan

The first and foremost of all advise is seeking refuge in Allah from shaytan and from the evils in ourselves and from our wrong doings. The Prophet (S) gave us a prescription as is narrated by Sulayman Ibn Sard RA that while he was with the Prophet (S), two people were blaming each other. The face of one became red and his jugular veins swelled. The Prophet (S) said; I

know a statement if he were to say it then the anger of the person would subside. He should say: "Audhu billahi minashaytan nirajeem." (I seek refuge in Allah from shaytan the accursed).

A Muslim must think before acting or speaking. As soon as the feeling of anger appears to oneself, then there is a need to think of why anger appears and whether it is necessary to be angry. While asking these questions, the person must work righteousness in order to shun the whisperings of shaytan and make the Hereafter the main goal.

2. Reading the Qur'an and remembering Allah much

Having Taqwah of Allah and reading the Qur'an is very effective as this trains the body and mind towards all that is good. Allah SWT says: "Those who spend in prosperity and in adversity, who repress anger, and who pardon men; verily, Allâh loves Al-Muhsinoon." [Surah Aal-'Imran:134]

We need to restrain anger and be patient, as we may dislike something that in reality may have benefits that we do not know. Furthermore ask yourself what reason you have to get angry when what Allah SWT ordained has occurred? Think of Allah's Anger and Punishment and ask yourself if Allah's wrath is less than our wrath? What happens when He SWT expresses His wrath? We humans who seek forgiveness from Allah must be able to forgive others first.

When one forgives someone else, it establishes peace and tranquillity in one's heart. The Prophet (S) said: "Those who have mercy will receive the mercy of the Most Merciful. Have mercy on those who are on earth, the One in heavens will have mercy on you." [Sunan Tirmidhi]

3. Understanding the merits of controlling one's anger

There are incalculable virtues in the Quran and Sunnah for a person who controls his anger. Here we cite but a few of them. Tabarani records in his collection that the Prophet (S) said: "Whoever controls his temper then Allah will take away punishment from him and whosoever safeguards his tongue Allah will conceal his sins."

In the collection of Tirmidhi and Abu Dawood, the Prophet (S) said: "Whoever controls their temper in a state that if he wanted, he could have took revenge; then on the day of judgement Allah will call him in front of everyone and will give him the choice of picking the Hoor of his choice."

Anas RA narrated that the Messenger of Allah (SA) said: "Whoever takes up his tongue as treasure Allah will keep his secrets concealed and whoever restrains his anger Allah will withhold his punishment on the resurrection day... [?]

The Prophet (S) said: "The best of you are those who are slow to anger and swift to cool down... Beware of anger, for it is a live coal on the heart of the descendants of Adam." [Sunan Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 1331]

4. Understanding the dangers of anger

In the Quran we are repeatedly reminded that Allah sees and hears us, thus His knowledge encompasses everything. When we realise this, how then can anyone get carried away into a haram?

Anger is unlawful because it destroys the faith of a man. The person in anger has no control over what he is doing or saying and thus will regret the results afterwards. Bah ibn Hakim RA reported that the Messenger of Allah (S) said: "Verily anger spoils faith just as aloe spoils honey." [?]

Allah's Messenger (S) said: "A Muslim is not allowed to stay angry with his Muslim brother over three days, and he who dies while in this state (i.e. while being angry) will go to hell fire." [Sunan Abu Dawood (Saheeh Al Jami) - page 7609]

5. Knowing what causes anger and removing them from our lives

Among the chief causes of anger are pride and arrogance, since a prideful person is easily offended and painfully stung by criticism. Being argumentative is another cause where the more a person disputes with others, the less likely he is to see reason and his views become increasingly polarised and personally charged. A Muslim is therefore, encouraged to avoid these negative character traits.

Other causes of anger are self-conceit, self-praise, miserliness, jesting and ridiculing of others and greed. If these evils are united in an individual, then the character becomes hard to subdue. Therefore these things should be removed by their opposites; Self-praise is to be removed by modesty. Pride is to be removed by knowing one's own origin and knowing Allah's power over His creation. Greed is to be removed by remaining satisfied with necessity and miserliness by giving regularly in charity.

6. Keeping silent and exhibiting wisdom.

The Prophet (S) said: "If any of you becomes angry, let him keep silent." (Musnad Ahmad 1/329). If angry, man evaluates to knee-jerk reaction in a fit of need. Therefore the Prophet (S) advised the angry man to restrain himself and remain silent.

One should not act based on anger or while angry. Abu Hurayrah RA narrated that the Messenger of Allah said: "Let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day either speak good or keep silent, and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day be generous to his neighbour, and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day be generous to his guest." [Saheeh Bukhari and Muslim]

Keeping silent when anger befalls you or someone around you is a safe way from making a situation worse. It is also a sign of wisdom not to involve yourself in something that in essence you do not want to be responsible for or concerned with.

7. Making wudu and/or doing ghusl

Both of these antidotes are related to water because anger is from the flames of shaytan. Atiyyah as-Sa'di narrated that Abu Wa'il al-Qass said: "We entered upon Urwah ibn Muhammad ibn as-Sa'di. A man spoke to him and made him angry. So he stood and performed ablution; he then returned and performed ablution, and said: My father told me on the authority of my grandfather Atiyyah who reported the Prophet (S) as saying: Anger comes from shaytan and shaytan was created of fire; and fire is extinguished only with water; so when one of you becomes angry, he should perform ablution." [Sunan Abu Dawood, 41/4766]

In reality, anger is like fire and the element that extinguishes fire is water. For many, making wudu or ghusl works to subdue anger. We need to be slow to anger and quick to cool down, even if it means taking a cold shower.

8. Sitting down or lying down

Abu Dharr RA narrated that the Messenger of Allah (S) advised us: "When one of you becomes angry while standing, he should sit down. If the anger leaves him, well and good; otherwise he should lie down." [Sunan Abu Dawood]

The Prophet (S) advised us that when angry, one should try to change his body position. When a person is lying down, he becomes humble and is far from exacting retaliation then a person who is sitting, is further than the one who is standing. If none of these are practical in a given situation, then simply walking away from the situation can have a positive result as you physically remove yourself from the scene of anger.

9. Spreading the Salaam, Shaking hands and giving gifts.

Abdullah ibn Salaam RA narrated that: "The very first thing which I heard the Holy Prophet say (when he arrived in Madinah) was; 'O People, spread salaam and feed the people, keep good relations with your kith and kin and at nightfall engage yourself in salaah while others are asleep, for you will enter Paradise safely.' [?]

Anger is a destabilising thought and a most dividing emotion between friends and family. It takes away judgment and leads to hastiness and wrong actions that one would need to repent from later. During anger, one can be physically or verbally or mentally abusive. The Prophet (S) advised to: "Shake hands and rancor will disappear. Give gifts to each other and love each other and enmity will disappear" [Saheeh Muslim]

Socially, this hadith promotes better relationship among people. We should become accustomed to giving gifts to family and friends on a regular basis as it strengthens love and creates bonds. This would consequently remove reasons for anger to develop and by fulfilling our

obligations towards others (who have wronged you) may later lead them to think and change for to be better. We need to be the change that we want to see in others.

10. Avoid being over-sensitive

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri RA narrated that the Messenger (S) mentioned anger, saying: "Some are swift to anger and swift to cool down, the one characteristic making up for the other; some are slow to anger and slow to cool down, the one characteristic making up for the other; but the best of you are those who are slow to anger and swift to cool down, and the worst of you are those who are swift to anger and slow to cool down." He continued, "Beware of anger, for it is a live coal on the heart of the descendant of Adam. Do you not notice the swelling of the veins of his neck and the redness of his eyes? So when anyone experiences anything of that nature he should lie down and cleave to the earth." [Sunan Tirmidhi]

He (S) also said: "A person should be cautious from being angry." [Saheeh Bukhari] – This caution would also be exhibited in matters that lead to anger in the first place. Lowering our sensitivity level makes it easier not to over-react and avoid anger altogether as pride would have no place breed.

One of our Salaf said; "One of you might see his own faults but he still loves himself. He then hates his Muslim brother on suspicion. So where is the logic in this?"

Summary

We need to mention that not all anger is sinful. Anger that inspires a person to avenge his own personal feelings and loss is indeed blameworthy. However, anger for the sake of Allah and for His religion is not blameworthy. This anger, if it is truly and sincerely for Allah's sake, will only inspire us justice and noble deeds.

In the Saheehayn, it is related that the Companions said that Prophet (S) never became angry for anything done to him. However, if the sanctity of Allah was breached, then nothing could assuage his anger. Furthermore, it is related: "The Prophet (S) exhibited more shyness than a maiden in seclusion. If he saw something that he disliked, we would see it in his face." [Saheeh al Bukhari]

The Prophet (S) never acted angrily for personal reasons. He never once so much as raised his voice to his servants or his family. Anas RA relates that he worked as the Prophet's servant for ten years, and never once did the Prophet (S) so much as say "uff" to him or ask him when he did something "Why did you do that?" or ask him when he neglected something: "Why didn't you do that?" [Saheeh al Bukhari and Muslim]

It can be concluded that whosoever adopts qualities of thanking Allah for His favours - when one has the strength to forgive he forgives - and when he gets angry he remains quite; will be successful. By looking at the

narrations mentioned above, it is easy to see how, with a proper determined and deliberate approach, we can shape our characteristics to those that are successful.

These are some clearly defined examples and wisdoms that a person should learn in order to change his character and adapt the characteristics of generosity, kindness, calmness, modesty, patience and forgiving. If a person adapts these qualities, then he may be able to restrain himself when he is about to get angry. We need to be slow to anger and quick to cool down.